

# News from Ed Markey

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## **MARKEY RESPONDS TO BUSH ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCEMENT OF POTENTIAL AL QAEDA ATTACKS THIS SUMMER**

**Washington, DC:** Representative Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior Member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, today released the following statement in response to news that Al Qaeda is planning a major attack on the United States this summer, released during a press conference held by Attorney General John Ashcroft and FBI Director Robert Mueller this afternoon.

“Today the Bush Administration announced that Al Qaeda may be planning a massive attack this summer against high-profile targets such as the opening of the World War II Memorial in Washington and the national conventions in Boston and New York. This warning follows new intelligence released last night by U.S. counterterrorism and law enforcement officials indicating that a group of terrorists already is deployed inside the United States and is preparing to launch a major attack this summer. This afternoon, Attorney General Ashcroft called on the American people to stay vigilant, alert authorities if they see suspicious activity, and support law enforcement efforts to prevent terrorism.

“Americans want to help thwart terrorist attacks – they want a safe summer for their families and their neighbors. Americans also want to know that their government is doing its part to keep the country safe – raising our defenses, not just raising red flags.

“In light of today’s announcement, we need to evaluate – not just what the Bush Administration is saying about these terrorist threats – but what the Bush Administration is doing to reduce the risk of terrorist attacks that our nation continues to face. Unfortunately, when it comes to many of our most pressing security loopholes, the Bush Administration’s rhetoric has not produced the results needed to make us safer.

“First, cargo carried on passenger planes. Almost none of the commercial cargo transported on passenger planes is physically screened for explosives and other dangerous materials before it’s loaded onboard. So while passengers empty their pockets, take off their shoes, walk through metal detectors and have their cell phones, laptops, and cameras checked, cargo sails through security without being inspected and is deposited in the cargo hold right beneath passengers’ feet. This is unacceptable.

“The White House claims it’s made airline security improvements “from curb to cockpit.” But the Bush Administration has by-passed the cargo bay.

“Second, the threat that a dirty bomb or weapon of mass destruction will be detonated by a terrorist group. Yesterday, a counterterrorism official revealed that there is a special concern that terrorists may possess and use a chemical, biological or radiological weapon that could cause much more damage and casualties than a conventional bomb.

“At the same time the threat from a weapon of mass destruction has increased, the Bush Administration is busy trying to eliminate the only Federal program that prepares fire fighters, police officers and other hometown first responders for terrorist attacks using such weapons.

“The Metropolitan Medical Response System, or MMRS, provides funding to 125 cities – including Boston, Springfield and Worcester – so that their police and fire departments, hospitals, and public health officials can develop the plans needed to coordinate their response to potentially hundreds or thousands of casualties caused by a terrorist attack using a weapon of mass destruction.

“This program is so important, because if a dirty bomb is detonated in one of our cities or towns, residents won’t call Washington, DC. They’ll call their local police and fire departments, their local hospital and their local emergency responders, and these responders will need to know how to coordinate their response to save lives and minimize casualties.

“Our first responders are hometown heroes. But even heroes need help.

“Third, security at the LNG terminal in Everett. After the terrorist attacks on September 11th, the Bush Energy Department commissioned a study of LNG safety in Boston Harbor. We now know that this study seriously understated the risk to the citizens of Boston, Everett, and surrounding communities in the event of a terrorist attack against an LNG tanker as it enters the Port of Boston to dock at the Distrigas facility in Everett.

“The Bush Administration should strengthen LNG security standards and improve federal-state coordination on issues affecting LNG. Instead, the Bush White House is not doing enough to reduce terrorist threats against LNG facilities.

“Fourth, vehicle screening at airports. Last week, a dangerous security weakness at Logan Airport was uncovered. Commercial vehicles operated by contractors were being permitted to enter the airport without being physically inspected and driver’s identification were not being routinely checked at the gates.

“But while Massport is tightening its vehicle screening policy, there is no federal rule that requires other airports around the country to follow suit. This week, I wrote to Secretary Ridge to urge him to require every airport to inspect 100% of the vehicles and check

100% of the identification cards of all contractors who are driving commercial vehicles near sensitive areas of the airport.

“Fifth, security at nuclear facilities. We know from both Al Qaeda admissions and intelligence reports that terrorists are trying desperately to build dirty bombs or homemade nuclear weapons.

“The Bush Nuclear Regulatory Commission is supposed to be an industry watchdog – but sadly, it’s increasingly an industry lapdog, hiding behind closed doors with the nuclear energy industry and using security claims to prevent the public from knowing how little it’s doing to keep the reactors safe and secure.

“NRC used to stand for Nuclear Regulatory Commission. When it comes to protection of reactors from terrorists, NRC is “Not Really Concerned” about security weaknesses.

“Sixth, security at chemical plants. The Environmental Protection Agency has identified 123 chemical facilities around the country that contain high enough levels of toxic chemicals that a worst-case scenario attack could expose more than 1 million people living in the surrounding area to potentially fatal level of toxins.

“We saw just yesterday that an accidental fire in a chemical warehouse in the suburbs of Atlanta caused the evacuation of 300 people and several hospitalizations. Government researchers have estimated that if terrorists caused a large release of chlorine in a densely populated area it could kill 100 people per second.

“Despite this glaring vulnerability, the Bush Administration has continued to fight Democrats’ efforts to upgrade security at these facilities and ensure that chemical companies switch to less dangerous processes whenever possible.

“We must take action now. We don’t need another Bhopal-like blast in our own backyard.

“Today’s announcement by Attorney General Ashcroft and FBI Director Mueller is a sobering warning that we must remain alert to terrorist threats. But we must do more than just listen to what the Bush Administration says about these threats – we must also watch to see what the Administration does to reduce them.

“In case after case, the Bush Administration has been long on rhetoric, but short on results. We must do a better job, and we can do more, to protect ourselves against terrorist attacks,” Rep. Markey concluded.

The entirety of Rep. Markey’s remarks are available on the Web at <http://www.house.gov/markey>.

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